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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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***GOVERNOR'S ANNUAL BOOK PROGRAM KICKS OFF FIFTH YEAR***  
***Literacy program provides free books to first, fourth graders in Arizona***

PHOENIX – Governor Janet Napolitano kicks off the fifth year of her statewide literacy program tomorrow with a visit to Patterson Elementary School in Mesa. Through the generosity of private sponsors, she has distributed more than 500,000 free books to first and fourth grade students in Arizona since 2003.

“Learning to read is one of the first steps toward future academic success,” Governor Napolitano said. “This book program, made possible by private sponsors, is just one way of reaching out to Arizona’s children and helping each of them achieve their highest potential. Reading can open the door to so many new and exciting things.”

Fourth graders at Patterson Elementary will be the first to receive this year’s fourth grade book, *Grand Canyon: Exploring a Natural Wonder*, written and illustrated by Wendell Minor. Book distribution around the state will start later this month.

After two years of providing books to first grade students in Arizona, the Governor’s book program expanded to include fourth graders in 2005. Roughly 93,000 copies of *Grand Canyon: Exploring a Natural Wonder* will be distributed to students. The book gives children an inside view of one of the most remarkable natural wonders of the world.

This year’s first grade book, *The Gingerbread Cowboy*, authored by Janet Squires brings a southwestern twist to an old favorite. The book will be distributed to approximately 100,000 first grade students beginning later this month.

Private sponsorship by McDonald’s, HSBC – North America, and APS paid for all costs associated with printing and distributing *Grand Canyon: Exploring a Natural Wonder*. All three corporate sponsors have been part of the fourth grade book program since it began in 2005. The Helios Education Foundation joined Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold, Inc. this year as sponsors of *The Gingerbread Cowboy*. Freeport-McMoRan, formerly Phelps Dodge, has been involved with the Governor’s book program since it began.

Governor Napolitano will be visiting with more than 100 fourth graders at Patterson Elementary, 615 S. Cheshire in Mesa, Friday, November 9 at 9:30 a.m. Any media wishing to attend must bring their credentials.

For more information about the Office of the Governor, please visit [www.azgovernor.gov](http://www.azgovernor.gov).